

Water, Water Everywhere:

The Meaning of Baptism

(For Those Who Have Questions About Baptism)

By Bass Mitchell



*Baptism. I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

From <http://www.homiliesbyemail.com>

Water, Water Everywhere: The Meaning of Baptism

If you are reading this it's probably because you are thinking about baptism or preparing to be baptized. Perhaps it holds lots of questions for you. This booklet will help you understand the meaning of baptism and hopefully answer some of your questions. Space is added at the end for you to write down questions that you can ask your pastor after having read it. Also, throughout, you will find some activities you are asked to do to help you reflect on baptism and its significance for you.

Before you continue reading, do the following:

1. Read these Bible passages on baptism:

- A. Matthew 3: 13-17 (the baptism of Jesus)
- B. Romans 6:1-14 (Paul on baptism)

2. Pray out loud this prayer:

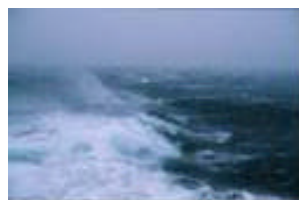
Loving God, open my eyes to see you better; open my heart to love you more; open my mind to understand your will and ways; help me know that I can ask You anything, any question, and trust You to help me find answers. Bless this reading and time of seeking. In the name of Christ, I pray. Amen.

3. Now, before reading, get out a pitcher of water and a cup. Each time you see this "Water..." pour some into the glass. Spend a moment just looking at the water, reflecting on it, letting whatever thoughts and feelings come to mind as you meditate on God's good gift of water.

Water...

It Can Hurt You

(Pour water into your glass)



My first memory of water is a warning as I stood with my father on the banks of the Neuse River in North Carolina. We had just purchased a house only two-hundred feet away from it. "Water can hurt you," he said and he went on to give me some rules to follow so that it would not hurt me. And I remember one of my classmates who did not take water seriously. He drowned one summer. And how I remember the water coming up under our house during a hurricane and actually taking some houses right back into the river.

Water...dangerous...destructive...
deadly...

Were you ever afraid of the water as a child?

What about the water frightens you?

These waters, the waters of baptism, are also dangerous, destructive and

deadly, my friends (pour water into the glass)...

I remember standing with my brother on the banks of a river while we watched the minister dunking people beneath the water. My brother observed, "You know, someone could get hurt doin' that."

Indeed, that is the point. Baptism is a kind of death. It destroys the old Adam, drowning him, burying him in a watery grave. I read somewhere that some baptismal pools in the church were actually formed in the shape of a grave.

Paul says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-5).

Be warned before you enter these waters. There is danger here. Here you will lose your life, but you will also find it.

What, if anything, about baptism frightens you or makes you feel uncomfortable?

Why?

Water...

But It's Also Fun

(Pour water into your glass)

Place an infant in water and she might be a little afraid at first, but soon she will be splashing around in it, having fun. We love water just for the sheer fun it gives - building pools to swim in it, boats to sail on it, skis to skip across its surface, little plastic guns to squirt one another with it. Water is fun. It is a source of joy for us.

The waters of baptism are waters of joy too - joy that we are God's children, forgiven and given abundant and eternal life. If any people should be known for their joy and enjoyment of life, it should be Christians who begin their lives in the joyous waters of baptism.

Water...

Welcome to the Family

(Pour water into your glass)



I was joining a Boy Scouts troop and we had a cabin on the river where we had our meetings. I still remember those strong young lads picking me up and carrying me to the river, as they did every new scout, and shouting as they swung me back and forth, "One, two, three..." and sending me soaring through the air and into the river. I didn't mind it at all, (for throwing a bass in the river is about